

Explanation of the Poem:

Sunset and evening star,

And one clear call for me!

And may there be no moaning of the bar,

When I put out to sea,

The poem initiates with a gloomy note regarding death. The sunset and the evening star collaborate to depict a picture of the closing day. The poet finds the sunset relatable to his life. He correlates his old age with the setting sun. While the approaching night foreshadows his death. As the poet penned this poem three years prior to his demise when he was afflicted with a critical illness, therefore, it can be said that he wrote these lines while contemplating his death. The second line of the stanza suggests that someone is calling him and according to the context of the poem, it seems that the poet realizes that his time on earth is up. His death is beckoning him.

In the third line of the stanza, he hopes that he would not hear any moaning sounds of the bar when he travels towards the sea. Literally, “moaning” denotes the sounds produced by the sea waves when they collide with the sandbar. This happens during the low tide when the bar reappears. This time is the most dangerous for a sea voyage as a ship can collide with the bar resulting in a disaster. So literally, it seems that the speaker wants to avoid a disaster at sea so he does not want to hear the moaning of the bar. The symbolic meaning of moaning is different. It signifies the pain and agony that accompanies the phenomena of death. It seems that the poet does not want any sadness attached to his death. He wants to leave this world in peace. The metrical analysis reveals that the poet does not use one specific meter in the poem. Rather, he utilizes a combination of different meters, which makes a significant recurrent rhythm.

In the first stanza, the first line is in iambic dimeter, the second one in iambic trimeter, the third in iambic pentameter, and the fourth in iambic trimeter. Variation and amalgamation of these meters create a specific rhythm imitating the ebb and flow of the sea waves.

*But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.*

The second stanza starts with a qualifier “but”. The poet says that such a tide, which performs the great task of carrying a person from one realm to another one, is dignified and deep. It seems that the tide is overflowing with sound and foam, thus, it appears calm. Literally, the only full tide can carry a ship safely across a bar. Symbolically, the poet wants to signify that a person can face death bravely only if he has great faith in God. The depth of the tide refers to strong faith. The last line “turns again home” refers to the sea waves. It implies that the waves initiate from the vast sea, touch the shore briefly and then return to the deep ocean of infinity. “Boundless deep” in the third line of stanza symbolizes the eternal home of the soul. Here the poet refers to the Christian belief that life on earth is temporary. Ultimately, every individual has to return to the real home of the soul, which lies in another realm.